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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BELGRADE 001123

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SUBJECT: KOSOVO: BELGRADE WORRIED ABOUT ELEPHANT ROUND

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1. (SBU) SUMMARY: In a July 11 meeting with Contact Group representatives, Kosovo status negotiator Leon Kojen conveyed a letter from PM Kostunica and President Tadic to UNOSK Special Envoy Ahtisaari. Kojen signaled profound Belgrade concern that the upcoming high-level status meeting ("elephant round") would be a one-time (fruitless) event that would lead to Ahtisaari moving swiftly ahead with a final status proposal. The GOS letter aims to ensure that the first elephant round meeting is the beginning, rather than the end, of a status process. Kojen could not confirm the availability of Tadic and Kostunica for a status meeting on 7/24. Kojen disassociated himself and Tadic from statements by a Kostunica advisor critical of UNOSK. Text of the letter to Ahtisaari follows in paragraph 6. END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) Kojen conveyed a July 10 letter co-signed by Kostunica and Tadic to Ahtisaari. The letter reiterates many of the points as the May 18 joint letter, in which they suggested a new format to Kosovo status talks. Kojen said that both the President and Prime Minister remain committed to the UNOSK process but are unclear about what will happen after the initial round of talks between top leaders of Serbia and Kosovo. Kojen stressed that knowing what will come after the first round will allow both sides to be more productive in their preparations. Kojen said the talks are at a delicate moment and hoped that procedural concerns would not ultimately limit the productivity of the talks or lead to a needless cessation of negotiations (and by extension an imposed settlement in Kosovo).

3. (SBU) The German Ambassador asked Kojen about the perceived contradictory messages coming out of Belgrade; on one side, the GOS offers Ahtisaari suggestions about the format and process of talks, and on the other, PM advisor Simic attacks UNOSK. (Note: In an interview with Belgrade daily Politika, Aleksander Simic said Deputy Envoy Albert Rohan is doing a bad job and the talks are unsuccessful. End note.) Kojen said that he had not had time to talk to Simic since the interview and personally he was taken by surprise by Simic's blunt comments. Kojen said that Simic was giving his personal opinion and not considered policy, and it was certainly not the policy of President Tadic.

4. (SBU) Kojen emphasized that Belgrade's commitment to the UNOSK process is sincere, and expressed hope that the Albanians would come ready to negotiate. According to Kojen, the Albanians followed each Vienna round with public statements that an independent Kosovo is inevitable. Kojen opined the international community's reaction would be much harsher towards the GOS if the Serbs said similar things about an autonomous Kosovo within Serbia being predetermined.

5. (SBU) COMMENT: Despite the fact that Belgrade has absolutely no intention of making any type of compromise on independence, the

leadership fears that the first elephant round will be the last and that UNOSSEK negotiations will quickly come to a close. This letter is another attempt to prolong the UNOSSEK process and delay Ahtisaari's recommendation to the UNSC. We should not engage on this latest maneuver and proceed on the agreed timeline.

¶6. (U) Begin text of letter to Ahtisaari.

Dear Mr. Ahtisaari,

Thank you for your letter of 3 July 2006, in which you replied to our earlier letter of 19 June 2006.

We are fully convinced that direct talks on the future status of Kosovo and Metohija will provide elements for a political compromise and a negotiated solution to the question of the future status of Kosovo and Metohija. We have been advocating such talks for some months now, and we welcome the opportunity to discuss the central issues of the entire status process and the future status itself with the political leaders of the Kosovo and Metohija Albanians.

We believe that the importance of the question to be discussed requires us to define together the procedural framework for direct talks on the future status of Kosovo and Metohija. The suggestions we shall make in this regard are motivated by our wish to do everything possible to move the status process to a successful conclusion, and with this in view we want to present to you the following ideas and proposals:

¶1. Talks on the future status of Kosovo and Metohija should be guided by democratic values and European standards, with full respect of international law and the principles of the UN Charter. In particular, they should be based on the UNSC Resolution 1244, the validity of which must be recognized by all the parties to the talks.

¶2. Any attempt to influence the talks by the use or threat of violence, or through promoting or condoning violence, is completely

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unacceptable.

¶3. We think that you, as the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General, should chair the meetings directly concerned with the future status of Kosovo and Metohija, and we are firmly committed to seeking a mutually acceptable solution of the status question.

¶4. After the first meeting devoted to the issue of future status, where the two parties should present their status platforms, talks should continue with four tables concerned with the following questions:

(a) Essential elements of a new constitution of Kosovo and Metohija, including the political structure to be established in the province, the guarantees of individual rights and liberties, and the guarantees of the rights of communities.

(b) Broad security issues, including possible demilitarization of Kosovo and Metohija, as well as the purpose, structure, size, authority, and duration of the proposed international security presence in the province.

(c) Crucial economic and financial issues, including privatization, public and private property issues, Kosovo-related part of Serbia's external debt, and the re-establishment of economic ties between Serbia and Kosovo and Metohija.

(d) Decentralization, where talks to date have clarified the positions of the two parties and suggested possible ways of reaching an agreement.

¶5. In order to ensure that talks at the four tables should proceed smoothly, we propose the establishment of four working groups, whose task would be to prepare proposals to be discussed at each round of the talks. The working groups should consider and clearly define the positions of the two parties, identifying areas where agreement has

already been reached, areas where agreement seems possible, as well as areas where the positions remain far apart. The meetings of the working groups should be chaired by UNOSEK representatives, and they should be held in turn in Belgrade and Pristina.

¶16. After assessing the results achieved at the four tables and consultations with the two parties, the Special Envoy proposes a further meeting of the highest political representatives of the two sides. At such meetings of the highest representatives, there should be no restrictions on the right to reply, either with respect to time or the number of occasions one wishes to exercise this right in the interest of clarification.

A verbatim record should be kept and given: or authorization to the heads of the two delegations at such meetings, as well as at the meetings of the four tables and the working group.

¶17. At the first meeting of the highest political representatives of the Republic of Serbia and the Provisional Institutions of Kosovo and Metohija, the two sides should present their status platforms and together with the Special Envoy confirm the procedural rules for the continuation of the talks. We think that at this first meeting the representatives of the Republic of Serbia should speak first with the order reversed at the next meeting directly concerned with the future status of Kosovo and Metohija.

We want to assure you that the Republic of Serbia is firmly committed to doing everything necessary to achieve a genuine compromise through direct talks, a compromise which will be a decisive contribution to the peace and stability in the region.

We are convinced that we shall succeed in this only if define together an appropriate procedural framework, and it is for this reason that we feel it important that crucial questions of procedure with regard to the forthcoming Vienna meeting on status and the structuring of talks after that be clarified in advance.

Yours sincerely,

/s/  
Boris Tadic  
President of Serbia

/s/  
Vojislav Kostunica  
Prime Minister of Serbia

End text of letter.  
POLT